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RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7749
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0350
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RHMCSUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/INS; SCA/RA JOHN SCHLOSSER AND ANISH GOEL;
ANE/AA LISA CHILES AND MARK WARD; ANE/SAA KAY FREEMAN;
ANE/IR RICHARD STEELMAN; ANE/TS JOHN WILSON, BARNEY POPKIN
AND CINDY LOWRY; EGAT/I&E JUAN BELT; EGAT/I&E/E GORDON
WEYNAND; EE/EG/EI ROBERT ICHORD; INDIA/SARI/E ROBYN
MCGUCKIN

MISSIONS FOR ECON OFFICERS AND USAID DIRECTORS; DEPT. OF
ENERGY FOR INTERNATIONAL ENERGY COOPERATION/ EUROPEAN AND
ASIAN AFFAIRS DIR ROBERT PRICE, TOM CUTLER; DEPT. OF
COMMERCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE/ PAUL HUEPER

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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: AMBASSADOR HIGHLIGHTS U.S.EFFORTS AT
EARTH DAY 2007 EVENT

SUMMARY:

¶1. Ambassador addressed an event organized by the U.S. Embassy, USAID and the Sri Lanka Energy Managers Association (SLEMA) to commemorate Earth Day 2007. Over 300 school children, government officials, representatives of the private sector and local NGOs participated in this half day seminar. The event highlighted issues related to climate change, the importance of cleaner energy sources, and what all of us can do to use energy more efficiently to reduce global warming. End Summary.

EARTH DAY EVENTS

¶2. Ambassador delivered the keynote speech at a seminar held in Colombo on May 17 to commemorate Earth Day 2007. In his speech, he stated that the responsibility to protect the environment and prevent global warming falls on all sectors and citizens and requires a combination of supportive policies, technologies, and, most importantly, attitude and lifestyle changes. Ambassador noted that the United States, along with 180 countries, had accepted the findings and the way forward described in the 4th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He elaborated on several of the recent decisions taken by the U.S. Government to combat global warming, such as President Bush's announcement committing the U.S. to reduce domestic greenhouse gas emissions by striving to cut emissions per unit of economic activity by 18% over the next 10 years. He also discussed President Bush's "Twenty Ten" plan to cut gasoline consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles by 20 percent over the next 10 years. Speaking on specific technological interventions he highlighted the importance of incorporating "green building" concepts in new

construction, citing the successes of the emerging green building industry in India. These were advanced through USAID's support for the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)- certified Green Business Center in India. He stated that the U.S. will continue to support international research, invest in science and technology, and join hands with the international community to develop an efficient and coordinated response to global climate change.

13. The Earth Day event included three presentations by subject matter experts on energy-related themes as well as presentations on reducing global warming by students from three leading schools. Over 300 school children, government officials, representatives of the private sector, and local NGOs participated in the half-day seminar. An exhibition with stalls from NGOs, the private sector, and school clubs was also organized so that the students could interact and gain further information on projects, services and appliances available in Sri Lanka to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

14. The experts who addressed the students provided background on the dynamics of energy mixes, how to increase the use of renewables, the importance of energy efficiency, and how our present lifestyle must adapt to one that is geared towards energy conservation. One of Sri Lanka's most prominent business leaders also addressed the gathering, stressing the fact that businesses also have a major role to play in climate change mitigation.

15. The three presentations from the students were of high quality, incorporating scientific details, philosophy, and

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ideas for social change. In the spirit of Earth Day they all highlighted the need for the current and future generations to be more informed and proactive in their individual lives as well as in the spheres of policy and public action. The students had done considerable research and spoke eloquently in English.

16. The key messages shared at the event can be summarized as follows:(1) On a global scale, Sri Lanka's contribution to global warming is minimal, however the repercussions of this phenomenon will certainly affect Sri Lanka;(2) Fossil fuel based energy sources used for industries, transport, and electricity generation are among the main culprits of global warming. In 2000, Sri Lanka's overall energy mix included 58% from renewable sources (mainly hydropower, plus some biomass for household and industrial use) and the balance of 42% from fossil fuels. In 2006 the share of renewable sources had fallen to 52%;(3) Despite the reduction in the renewable energy share, at present Sri Lanka is among the top 15 countries that produce a larger share of their electricity supply from renewables (Norway tops the list with 99%, followed by Brazil, Colombia and Iceland, all in the range of 80-90%);(4) Sri Lanka is likely to lose its place amongst the countries ranked with high use of renewables as projections indicate that increased use of thermal energy sources will make renewable energy only 22% of the total by 2015;(5) The Government of Sri Lanka is interested in pushing for increased use of renewables but the necessary directives and allocation of resources have not yet been undertaken;(6) Energy efficiency has a key role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AS A VEHICLE FOR COMBATTING CLIMATE CHANGE

17. One of the main objectives of the Earth Day celebration

was to highlight the role of energy efficiency in combating climate change and the fact that this option can be adopted and practiced by individuals and communities on a local and national scale. The presentations highlighted numerous ways to save energy, drawing upon lessons from the past, technological innovations from the present, and a vision of the future. They presented the case for demonstrating greater social responsibility by adopting simple but effective lifestyle changes.

¶9. At the end of the event, all participants were given a compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb as a token, but also as a means to encourage children to use it in their homes and encourage their parents and friends to switch from inefficient incandescent lights to more efficient and longer lasting CFLs that reduce the impact on climate change.

CONCLUSION

¶10. Global climate change is now widely accepted as a pressing environmental issue in Sri Lanka. Colombo's Earth Day event succeeded in enhancing awareness and exposing school children to the scientific facts; the economic, developmental, and social aspects of climate change; and the need for responsible use of energy in Sri Lanka and around the World.

BLAKE